

MINUTES FROM 2/13/08  
COMMISSION ON PRO SE LITIGANTS

Helena: Judy Meadows, Tara Veazey, Sally Johnson, Judge Snowberger, Neil Haight, Lonnie Browning, Patty Fain, Ann Gilkey, Chris Manos, Beth McLaughlin

Missoula: Monty Jewel, Ali Garab, Shirley Faust

Flathead: Peg Allison, Bobby Bovington

Billings: Pat Likeham

Approve last meeting's minutes via e-mail. Correct them on the Internet.

Tara introduced the new people attending from all sites.

Lonnie: On the job less than a month. Invited people to stay in touch with her ... keep her informed of new issues, etc.

Her report:

Billings - Self-Help Law Center opened on Jan. 2

Kalispell - " " " " " " Jan. 7

300 Clients served so far, 148 in Kalispell, 152 in Billings

There are 2 surveys:

- 1) Intake survey which is mandatory for people to get help
- 2) Customer satisfaction survey which is not mandatory to complete

1) Intake survey

50% people needed family law assistance

8% guardianship conservatorship

6% name change, consumer debt, wills, etc.

? needed help identifying which forms to use and help in completing them

50% were initiating court action

20% legal info in general, no goal

10% needed help in responding to papers they were served

9% had filed a law suite

90% Caucasian, 7.5% Native Americans, 1.4% Hispanic, 1.4% African American and Asian

2) Customer Satisfaction

2/3 are completing this survey even though it is not mandatory

90% overall very satisfied

9.5% Satisfied

99% received increased understanding of their problem

99% left knowing what to do next

Survey indicated people who helped at Law Centers were knowledgeable, explained things well, treated with respect and would recommend the center to a friend.

Self help law program can't staff a center everywhere so people are helped in other venues via mini-grants.

Application tailored to specific communities, e.g. courts

8 applications will be funded as best as they can. These will serve as a laboratory.

Are evaluation tools required for grants?

When mini-grants roll out, get local legislators and local bar involved. Possible newsletter to keep all informed/involved.

Manos- Mini-grants

Justice Foundations may supplement the grants to the maximum ... there is a deadline

Evaluations/accountabilities – someone has form to check up on this ... didn't get name of person who said this

Mini-grants recipients – state bar will push information to local.

Tara-In Bozeman on Friday, release grants awarded

Applicants have been from these judicial districts 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, and 21

Tara-structure evaluations close to self help centers

Judy asked how to capture data about self-litigants' law suits

Tara – 1 – why they came in

2 – would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up to get stories ... how centers helped

Beth and Judge Snowberger – check with judges to see if their work is decreasing due to the centers

Sally – lay ground work for work with university system for legislature to add credibility to centers

Fain – collaboration ... mediation instead of cases in courts

Manos- judges and/or clerks ask pro se litigants if they got help from self help center or they need to go to self help center

Peg – Bobby marks forms (for court) that self help center was used

Sally – Measure use of the centers with MT Supreme Court down the road

Beth – \$5000 still set aside for the Commission

Tara – accolades to people in the outlying areas

Peg's office is running stuff through the court – local relationship – good press – big thank you

Becky Berg – Yellowstone County, Judge Fagg, Bobby

Tara – received accolades for her work from commission

Shirley – have people who can write their testimonials to the legislators who are running for re-election

Fain – Ability to discuss issues

Supporting pro-bono programs  
2 tool boxes

- 1      1 existing programs   new local buy in  
         2 sustain programs  
         3 grow programs in areas where no support
- 2      making work as efficient and cost effective for pro bono attorneys and support

Fain – what she does depends upon feed back

Judy – how to include training of unbundling of services

Fain – give attorney as many options as possible

Judy – Talked about a program for courts of limited jurisdictions

Manos – Panel of judges in March – session committed to bring issues to forefront  
- MT Legal Services – bar will support three 1- hour consumer law phone CLEs  
and sometime also use videoconferencing

Fain – Settlement masters expanding in state courts

Judy – local bench/bar CLEs to give judges more understanding of unbundling with attorneys

Tara – Unbundled services as an option for Fain

Fain – Let people know what pro bono means  
Working on unbundled services model

Manos – Judges' comfort level - there is limited acceptance of some things, find out about Pro Bono?

Fain – Judges, clerks of court, attorneys, could be independently surveyed, add knowledge

Judge S – question on ghost writing

Tara – Clinics forms have nothing on them about pro se

Fain – people are doing their own writing

Tara – Legal Services and Hot Docs system

Judge S – States handle ghost writing differently

Fain – will be meeting with everyone in the spring – riding the circuit

Sally – Reviews pro- se filings for the Supreme Court, some are writs. She works for all the justices on a rotating basis, drafts proposed orders at request of justices.

New MT Rules of Appellate Procedures were approved by the Court.

Rule #5, pt 3: proceedings without paying fees – sally is drafting new form  
She discussed more about what she does.

Fain – has she encountered ghost writing

Sally – ghost writing by inmates, not lawyers

Tara, Ali,. Kevin and Judy on forms sub-committee

Tara – 1 style and formatting by line  
2 form for evaluation of forms

First set of style and formatting guidelines ... sample caption template

Develop forms subcommittee

Send info to court – Karen Nelson – IT for electronic forms

She had a time table of a month

Judge S – full court template good to be developed and used across the state  
Especially for protection orders, landlord tenant forms, and consumer forms

Tara – Evaluation and vetting process

Monty – does commission vote on this in early March ... the formatting...  
can it be decided on-line?

Tara- once something gets to commission, it first goes to subcommittee  
subject specialty lawyers?  
Process needs to be one month long  
2 subject people to review for 2 weeks  
Draft forms copy sent to every judge, clerk of courts, etc.

Judge S – all comments come back to author and subcommittee, author resubmits 1 week for  
approval as soon as draft form posted on commissions website and also final forms on  
website

Tara- timeline important to get forms done  
Justice Gray does not want forms to get bogged down in process

Monty – thinks timeline is too short

Tara – as long as evaluation is online – process can be shorter  
Call someone to review

Judge S – Best reviewed in a conversation mode

Tara – People can respond to forms ... be as flexible as possible

Monty – If you go to non-profits – use same process to take forms and file them  
are there any consequences for using forms not approved by the commission?

Judy – not all forms onsite are approved by commission

Judge S – there are no mandatory forms in MT  
Forms need to comply with district court rules

Judy – more consistency of forms and approved by commission

Tara – substantive issues are more important than formatting and the rules?

Monty – if someone has a good idea, accept it

Judy – self help litigants network conference in Oct for court administrators  
Judy is planning distance services module

Judy – coordination of website  
no 3<sup>rd</sup> website  
creating new website, court based